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WHERE SHOULD SPIES GO ON VACATION?

CPYRGHT

JULIAN BARBER: Stephen Geer discusses one of America's most pressing problems this evening -- where should spies go on vacation?

STEPHEN GEER: If you have been exposed to any of the recent crop of spy books, movies and television shows -- and it's hard to imagine how anyone could escape them -- then you must believe, as I do, that a spy's life is not an easy one. The Director of the CIA, Admiral William Raborn, seems to think so too.

CIA has asked Congress for legislation that would permit agents to travel to vacation spots at government expense. In a letter sent along with the proposed legislation, Admiral Raborn requested the travel expenses for the agents and their families, but only for those spies who have served at certain designated hardship posts. An agent would be allowed to go to an area where he could, as Admiral Raborn put it, relax and obtain needed freedom from climatic and other conditions which caused his post to be designated a hardship post. These vacations would be permitted once during a two-year tour of duty, or twice during a three-year tour.

Now if an unsigned article in the current issue of Esquire is accurate, it may be desirable to send CIA trainees on vacation when their training is concluded. According to the article entitled "I Spy for the CIA," agents in training are sent out to break into factories and stores. This educational effort comes at the end of their instruction program in lock-picking and other entry problems. The students are equipped with complete burglar kits, and once inside the designated factory or store, they must take photographs of documents or letters, and according to the article, the police and the owners of the buildings are not notified of these little exercises in penetration. And if an agent is caught, he's supposed to escape or talk his way out of it.

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If that doesn't work, and he's arrested, he's not permitted to say he's with the CIA. But when he's allowed that one phone call to his lawyer, he calls the CIA, says, "Sorry about that chief," and strings are pulled with the police to spring him. Now you know that must be a terrible strain on any man -- at least any man who isn't a burglar by profession. After such an experience a vacation would be most desirable. Perhaps the CIA could set up a special resort for new agents -- one that would have the usual facilities, swimming pool, golf course, and so forth, but one that would also be located far from any factories or stores, and that would have no locks on the doors, and in order to relieve the strain of secrecy, each agent could wear a little convention badge, reading, "Hello, I'm Agent 237. Would you believe 236?"

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